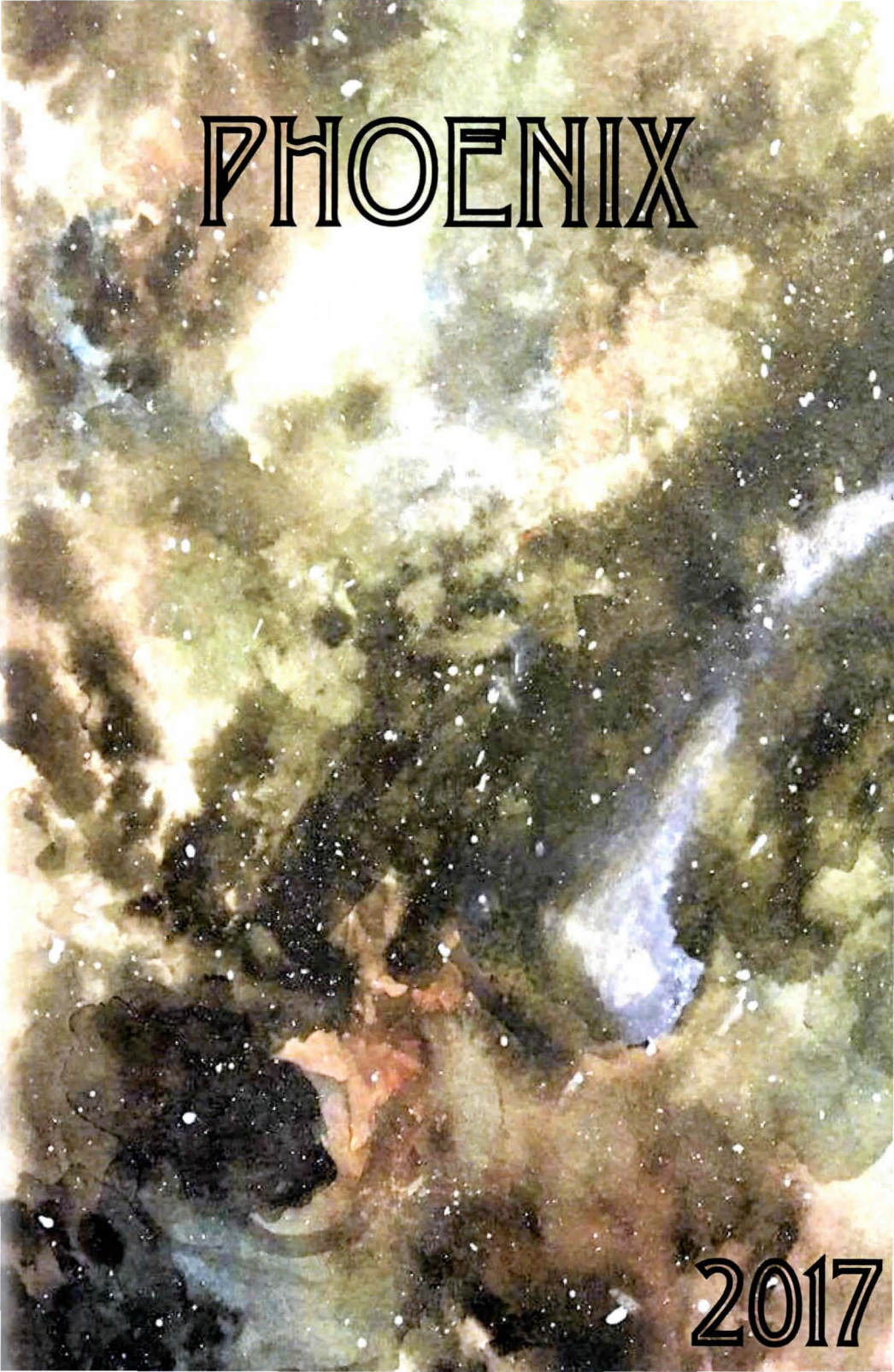




PHOENIX

2017

Phoenix is the literary and arts magazine of The College of New Rochelle. Published in the spring of each academic year, this magazine showcases the artistic talents of The College of New Rochelle community. Prose, poetry, photography, and camera-ready images of other art forms are encouraged from students, faculty, staff, and alumnae/i from all four schools.

All correspondence may be sent electronically to:
Phoenix@cnr.edu

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PHOENIX

2017

STAFF

Alyssa Medina, Editor-in-Chief, 2017

Steven Hobbs, Advisor, 2016-2017



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Editor's Note

Dearest readers,

I am proud to present to you the 2016-2017 issue of *Phoenix*, a beautiful collection of pieces filled with emotion, fervor and strength. Throughout this academic year, our college community has experienced a period of adverse changes, some positive and others worrisome. Our world is changing; feelings run rampant and the weight of uncertainty hangs above many a head.

My hope is that this year's issue will lead you through the reflections of your fellow peers, to both move and soothe you as you venture forth. Let the stories and poems anchor you to the images they create. Allow our visual amalgamations to capture your eyes.

I would like to thank all of the contributors to this issue. These works amazed and inspired me throughout the submission and layout process, fitting together perfectly. Without you, this magazine would never have come to light so wonderfully. May you all continue to create with these same passions. And thank you, readers, for investing your attention in us.

Your journey is just beginning. Do not allow yourself to be lost to the void, charge onwards, and remember: victory is closer than you may think.

Your Editor,
Alyssa Medina





2307

Luisa Calcano

(Acrylic Ink and fine point pen on black
Jaipur Indian Handmade Paper)

Decision

Annette Espinell

It is staring at me with eyebrows raised, shaking its head bullying me into making up my mind. 'This is it', it tells me. 'You have to stop putting it off'. But I refuse to acknowledge it. I am in full denial, certain that time is on my side.

It has always been.

But time has now become a luxury that I am way past due in paying. It has now pushed its way into my space with a collection notice and refuses to go away. I am out of breaks and second chances.

I stomp my feet and raise my fists in its direction threateningly expecting it to back up in fear and go away. Not this time. It threatens back instead and shoves me. 'How dare you!' I scream but it does not even flinch in reaction. It looks at me angrily and aggressively not giving an inch.

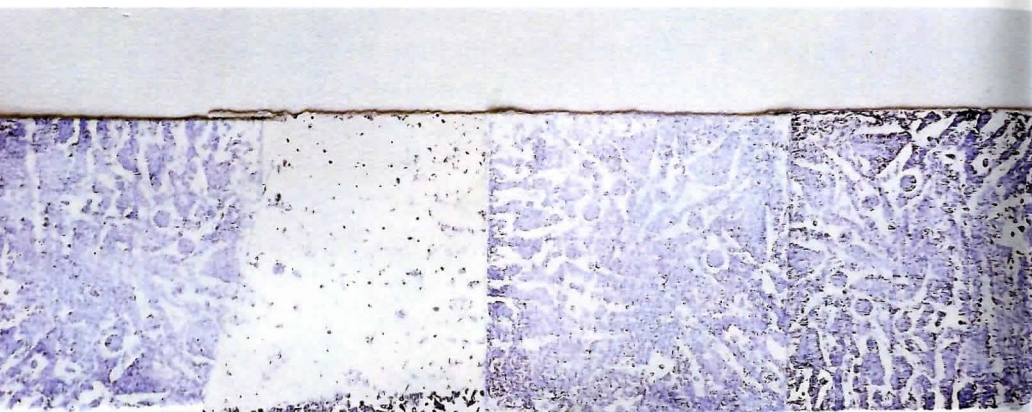
I now resort to pleading and begging convinced that my tears will soften it like before. Not this time. It ignores me and even smirks at me savvy to my well used tactic. It walks closer to me and I can almost feel body heat touching my skin increasing my anxiety and stress.

I try to bargain with it. 'What do you want to go away?' 'Only one thing', it answers, 'only one thing'. 'But I am not ready!' I yell in response. Unlike other times, it says nothing. Its silence screeches in my mind like brakes when they are pressed unexpectedly hard on the pavement. I flinch and cringe in reaction squeezing my eyes tightly.

Even with my eyes closed its presence cannot be ignored. It hovers, casting a shadow over me effectively cutting off my connection to light and warmth. I feel its cold breath up and down my spine. It is impossible to contain the shivers and goosebumps in my body. My eyes snap open and it is standing directly in front of me huffing and puffing like the big bad wolf making me feel like one of the trapped little pigs with no way of escape. It hisses in my ear 'it's time'.

Paralyzed in place with no other options, I finally give in. I nod in agreement. My body instantly relaxes in unadmitted relief. It takes a step back away from me allowing me a full deep breath. 'You win. I'll do it.' It smiles the smile of Sylvester the cat after finally eating Tweety Bird.

Decision then turns around and walks out of the room closing the door behind it.



Bridge
Emily Posner
(Intaglio Print)



Dream Cloud
Mecca Alim
(Paint Tool Sai)

MIND (FULL) NOISE

Glenn Slaby

It comes as words
It comes as voices
It comes as pictures
Soul's restlessness completed

It comes in pieces
It comes in waves
It interrupts life's segments
Mind's center never reached

It's unseen
It's internal
It swallows love
Relationships smothered,
expunged

It cancels your thoughts
It changes you
It becomes you
You become it - lost

It travels brain's wires
It fills empty spaces
Neuron to neuron
Peace reigns no longer

It disrupts
No act fulfilled
No act satisfied
No conversation complete

Thoughts humanly common
Erased. Infecting
Confidence, security
Love

Day or night
False comfort offered
Disrupts, disturbs, debilitates
When will it stop?

Before open wombs eye
Until darkness closes in
Mind, brain, infected
From birth to last lighted neuron

Sweet sleep may relief
Hypnotic TV, music
Or written word
It still finds ways to invade

A thought becomes an object
An object becomes a thought
In mind, in brain, confusion reigns
In an eternity of misdirection

Lost dreams
Lost careers
Lost loves
A life misplaced

Havoc created
Self-medicate delays
Destroys what inside remains
Soul now belongs to That Other

Prayer unfocused
Times travels unnoticed
Sunday's missions interrupted
Homilies, theologies, The Union, go missing

How do others see
How do others' brains think
How do they see others and me
What fills their mind's eye bringing peace?

What is their world
What are their dreams
What serenity experienced
Why can't their gift be given?

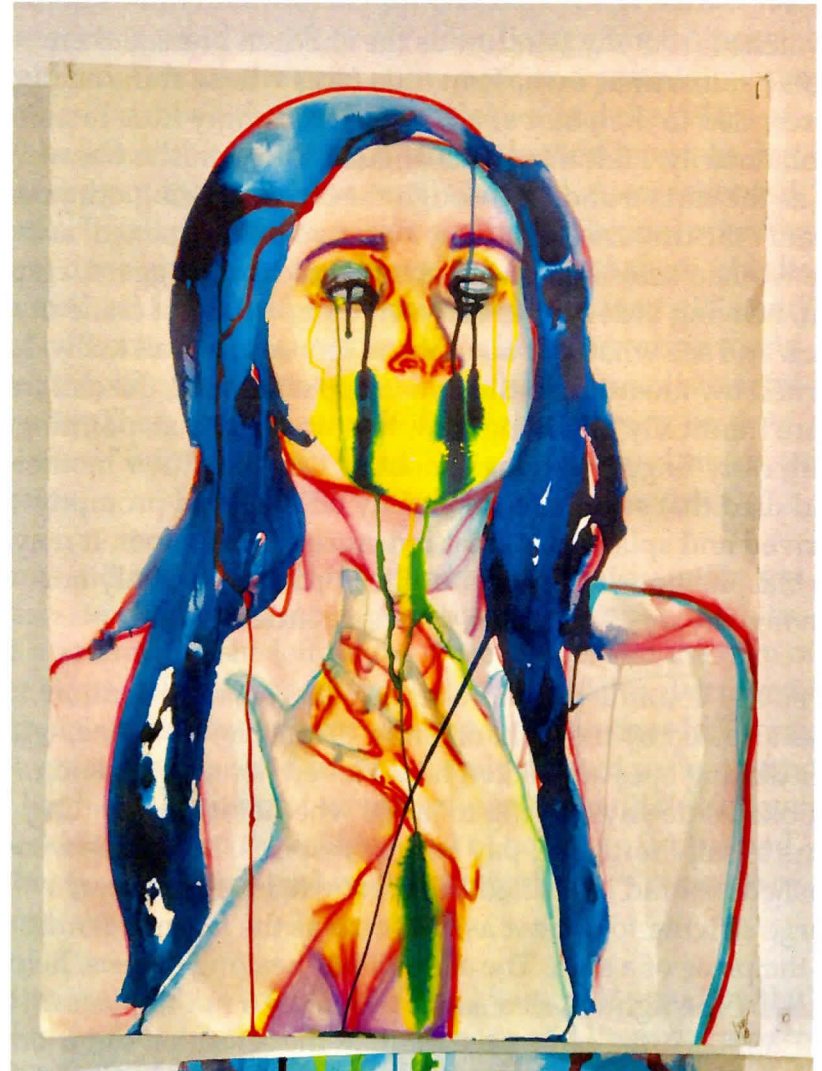
Why agony can't be seen
Why don't they understand
Why they think we're the same
(Bigotry of the unseen?)
When will we all come together?

When will thoughts flow
When will interrupts cease
When will I become an equal
When will I feel God?

Stuck

Jade Billups

I think I'm stuck
Between the Sun
And you
I think I'm stuck
Between the horizon
Ends
And you
I think I'm stuck
Between
Hating me
But wanting you
I think I'm stuck
In this moment
I can't move
Cause this moment
Emptied me
I transferred energy
To you
I think I'm stuck
Between getting on my
Knees
For the Lord
Or you
I think I'm stuck to
Sin
And you
I think I'm stuck
To the end
And you



Anger
Cristina Acevedo
(Aqueous Media)

Fingerprint

Naashia Naufal

I watched from my window as the children pressed their faces against their own. Thin little faces whose chins had descended to the point of a cliff; sharp, hungry little faces. Momentarily, I felt the pricks of guilt. This vanished however, as the carts trundled through the streets. "Bring out your dead!" the drivers called. One – no two doors opened, and the women across the street, shamefaced and haggard, crept out, heaving little bodies between them. I did not crane my neck and see what had ailed those tiny corpses: all knew. I turned my attention to the house opposite mine; the children were frantically gesturing now, this way and that, pointing with dirty fingers into their mouths. I sighed. Their mother had died that same afternoon. City officials had promptly arrived and splashed a great red cross on their door. It may be blasphemous to say so, but the Lord was certainly not having any mercy on those ravenous little beggars.

Even as I continued to stare at the children, my attention was arrested by the sight of Anne – Anne, lovely Anne, with her darting eyes and silken hair. I loved her to distraction. I looked sideways; trying to judge whether it was a fitting time to sally forth and pay her my respects. My hopes were dashed. Behind her sailed her great whale of a mother; a barge striving to appear as winsome as the fair maidenhead at the prow of a ship. The sight of her heaving breasts, held back by the tightly laced stays, produced a not unpleasant sensation. At the same time though, the sensation did irk me; the physician had urged me to cast my seed; such a build-up of humors was not wise. But since we were to be wed in a week, I decided I could contain my excitement till then.

I watched as Anne sauntered down my street. Pressing a bouquet of nosegays to her nose, she advanced until she reached my front door. Here, some digression was made:

from where I stood, I could see Mamma was being consulted for permission. For once, her Ladyship did not shake her head nor flash fire from her pincer-like eyes. A minute later, there was a timid knock at my door. Struggling to appear dignified, I shook the ruffs at my neck and patted down my clothes. I dabbed the hem of my sleeves and the palms of my hands with rose-water; I had not bathed in weeks, but that did not mean I had to smell like offal. As cavalier as I could, I walked into the parlor, as I heard Samuel open the front door, and usher her thence. Anne stood there, cheeks flushed, all by herself. Mamma I discerned, was still standing without, an orange stuffed with herbs hovering round the periphery of her nose, eyes toward heaven, distasteful as ever. There was the sound of wheels clattering on the cobbles; "Bring out your dead!" was the hue and cry raised again.

Anne did not tarry for long. She begged me to contain my kisses, and exhorted me to pray that ours would be a blessed marriage. As she left with a sweet smile, and the hem of her skirts in her delicately poised hands, I felt a delirium of happiness rise through me. As I opened the door for Anne, the great barge peered in, and sternly greeted me with a nod of her head. Knowing I would not see Anne till the following week, I cherished the image I had of her now; supple and lithe, swaying arms and wide bosom, the very pinnacle of perfection.

Later that night, I could not sleep. I went and stood by the window. The smell of unwashed hose and linen drifted from the corner of the room; I wrinkled my nose in distaste. I would tell Samuel to see about having it washed the following day. I peered through the glass; no adolescent phantoms clawed at their window at this time of the night. Uneasily, I kept vigil. Perhaps they had fallen asleep. Or, as was more likely, fainted from hunger. As the discomfort trawled over my skin, I cast eyes over the other houses; a light glim-

mered in one, casting shadows on the street. For once, there was no crying. No wailing, moaning, no midnight corpses wrapped in linen, and borne on the backs of four silent men. As though to challenge the silence, there appeared a cloaked figure. Warily, this thickly muffled figure trod down the street. Slowly, the figure approached the wretched children's front door. I watched in horror, and with the onlooker's ghoulis fascination, as it struggled to open the lock on their door with some clumsily figured instrument. Evidently, the stranger's trouble yielded no reward. Besides, the sounds of the implement, as they struck the front door, had raised the ghosts of the sleeping. Lights flickered in all the houses down the street. Hastily, the figure fled. As it approached the corner of the street, it was accosted by someone. This person appeared to have almost staggered on top of the stranger. But the latter evaded the clumsy embrace of the former, and escaped.

The next morning, I received a note from Anne's house. Penned by her father, it claimed that Anne was lain low with a fever; she had caught the ague perhaps. For the time being, the wedding was postponed. I crumpled the note in my hand, and felt an odd, sinking feeling. Samuel – in an attempt to buoy my spirits, said that an ague did not have to portend some tragic event. Look at Mrs. Dudley he said, who had caught the ague a few weeks ago, and lived to tell the tale. Weakly, I nodded.

Three days later, I received another note. This one ran much longer; I had to sit, so as not to stagger under the weight of the news it bore. There could be no doubt. Anne – who admitted to having stalked through the streets that night, in a mad, desperate and generous gesture to help the orphaned Leeway children, had been struck by the curse herself. "I very much fear that the person who accosted me that night, had already succumbed to the worst of the disease..."

I could have torn the hair out of my scalp. In the postscript, Anne had underlined, and urged me not to visit her. "Till Death do us part was ne'er truer than this moment..." Resisting Samuel's pleas, I donned my jerkin, and stalked through the streets, ankle deep in the slop of the day. Where the stench of decomposing flesh had not yet assailed my nostrils, was the sight of people sinking to the ground – boils on their faces; itching, scratching, and crying in pain as they sunk their fingers in their flesh. The only weapon I carried was a pomander, stuffed with herbs and spice; the smell of the musk emanating from it, overpowering my senses at time. The pomander swung round my neck, its pendulum hitting the base of my neck as I walked, and fearfully, I would touch it, reassured by the cold, metallic feel of it. I looked here and there; my head feeling as though it could have swiveled round my neck, as I prowled past a child in the throes of death, the dogs gnawing at it. The sound of wheels behind me made me halt; "Move on then!" the driver flailed his whip in my direction, and I promptly stood aside. Though a sheet covered the three little bodies, one of the faces was still visible. Sores covered the once fair forehead, near the eyes and mouth, and these boils were so black, so corroded in appearance, that I crossed myself. Truly, only the fortunate had escaped the scourge of God. Then I thought of Anne. As the cart rattled over the cobbles, the sheet was raised, and three pairs of dusty feet futilely kicked the air. I moved on.

Anne's house nestled in a corner of Charterhouse Square. My mouth dropped open as I edged nearer. Astonishment held sway over all other humors, as I looked at the pit of terrifying proportions that they had dug in the middle of the square. Corpses were dumped by the cart; one carried ten, another was overflowing with an amateur's estimate of forty; the smell of decay and decomposition pervaded my noses and held reign over all else. It was but five in the evening, and already a fire had been built near the center of the square. There were the usual rows of houses marked with a cross; God have mercy on this house was but a lip-lament now. Two women crouched before the fire, heads in their hands, wailing for all the world to see. City officials and members of the Privy

Council rode in an entourage; dressed in purple, heads held high, noses raised in disdain, just the same as they had been, before the onset of the pestilence. Carefully, I watched. Cautiously, I stepped over hands so blackened they resembled prolonged bruises, and dying eyes, until I reached the corner of the street. It astounded me that Anne's door bore on great cross. But it relieved me at the same time. How Anne had escaped the scrutiny of the Privy Council, was a matter on which I would brood later. Furtively, I knocked. No one answered. I tried the latch. The door opened. As I bent my head and stepped inside, I was aware more than anything else, of the pungency of death. It smelled as though someone had been brewing a potion of nausea, vomit, spittle, the foul odor of rotten lined, and decaying flesh. Decay! When I entered Anne's bedchamber, it was to find her neck stripped of its flesh – the sickness had crawled up to her face and devoured part of her chin. Terrified, I rocked to and fro, and stared at her. Anne lay in her bed, looking like a great, festering doll. As I drew nearer, she whimpered, her voice slow and muffled, "Go away". I shook my head. The household had fled that same morning. "They didn't stay?" I whispered in horror. Feebly, Anne shook her head. I savored this news, wondering what was worse: that Anne had been struck down like this, or that her family had fled to save their own skins. They had left, Anne whispered, a tear rolling down her cheek, and on to the tip of the gradually blackening nose, with looks of revulsion on their faces. Would I could have held Anne's hand at a moment such as this! But her hands – the very fingertips – aye the nails themselves, had been devoured by the blackness. Great sores had annexed parts of her body; hideously, they deflowered her before my very eyes. Eruptions of black lava had flooded the base of her throat.

The only thing I could do now was to blow her a kiss and bring her a tumbler full of water. As I rose to do so, Anne suddenly leapt out of bed. The sores had burst. Great clumps of pus and blood flew in the air; screeching, she clutched at me, her arms round my neck, rivulets of blood streaming from her eyes – even as I stared at them – those oceanic orbs I had once admired, I drew back, fear stifling my throat, strangling my voice. Soundlessly, I fled. Chairs, tables, all

manner of furniture was knocked aside as I rushed from that house. As I tripped down the street, I thought I saw two of the Privy Council members suspiciously glance my way; the next minute, they were riding off in the direction of Anne's house. Palms sweating, feet aching, I arrived at my house. I crouched by the door, panting. The window opposite mine was silent; no dilating eyes between puffy eyelids stared at me. Gone was the pointed little chin wedged on the casement. All that was left was a circle of tiny fingerprints on the glass. "Master?" Samuel appeared in the doorway. As I felt the vertigo overtake me, clouding my vision, benumbing my limbs, I threw myself before him.



Tundra
Alyssa Medina
(Photography)

Blood in the Forest

Emily Posner
(Monotype Print)



Tell me

Bianca Jeannot

Isn't it terrible
The way of life we must bare
Knowing any breath, any second, and any day,
Could be your very last
Without warning
Without reason
We are born to die
And somewhere within that short stretch of time
We learn to mourn the dead
And, we learn to mourn the living

Perhaps the reason we're able to keep breathing so calmly
And continue to move steadfast
Is that we place this reminder in the darkest corner of the mind
Refusing to see it, pushing it away,
So for a moment, we can be immortal
And pretend we'll see the sun and moon rise forever
Isn't it wonderful

A Thread

Patricia A. Roper (Williams)

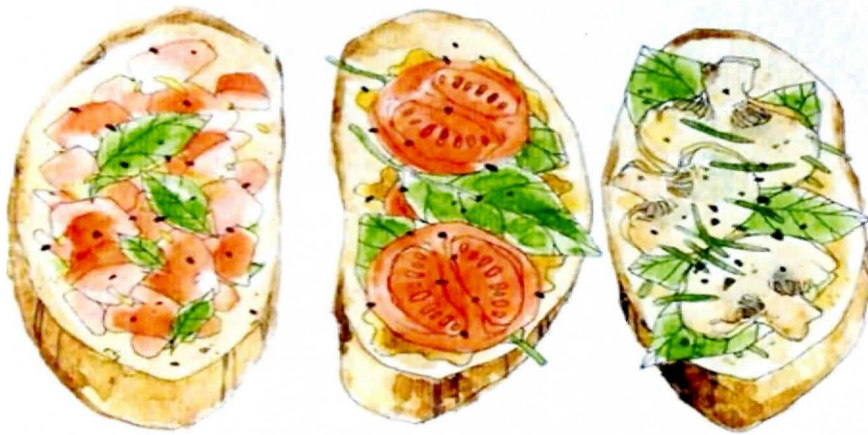
Wisps of dark auburn hair fell over her eyes. With the back of her right hand, she quickly pushed them back into place. Beads of perspiration appeared now on the tip of her broad nose. Tilting her head back ever so slightly, her brown eyes focused their attention on a hole in the wall about three and a half feet from the hardwood floor. The hole, an inch wide, was a mixture of mint green paint and crumbling plaster. She tried, but couldn't remember how it got there.

It seemed as though minutes had passed before she blinked her eyes again. With a great fuss she lifted her hands and with quick movements, rearranged the folds of her warm, but faded gray bathrobe on her lap. This robe had been the only present she received on a snowy Christmas morning two years before.

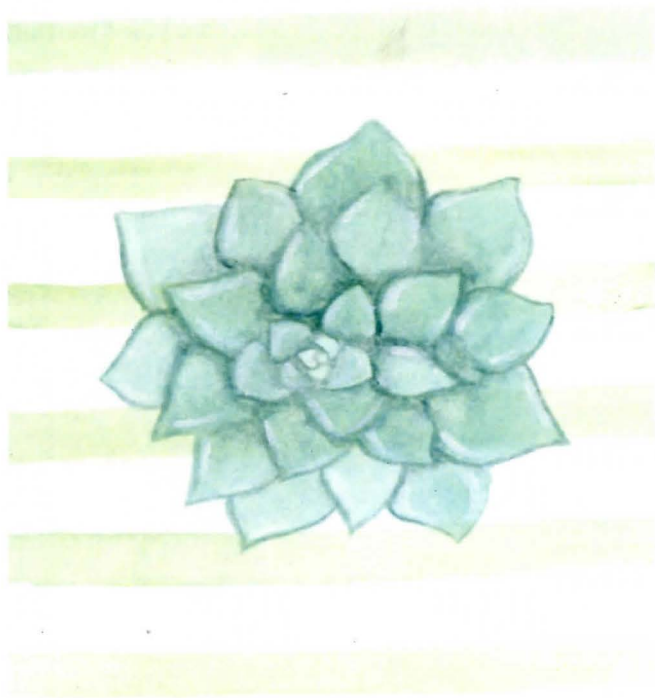
Then not knowing what else to do, five slender fingers played with the top button of her robe. The button drooped at an angle and hung loosely by a lone weak thread. Unable to resist, she pulled and the button bounced quietly to the floor below. It made a soft sound and she welcomed the diversion.



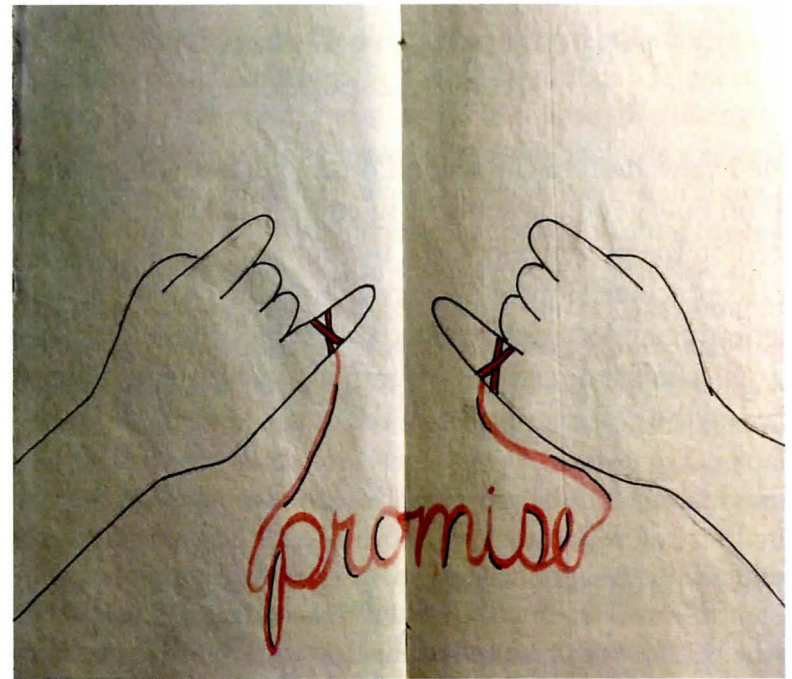
Precious Winter
Emily Posner
(Acrylic on Canvas)



Bruschettas
Chiaki Hagiwara
(Watercolor)



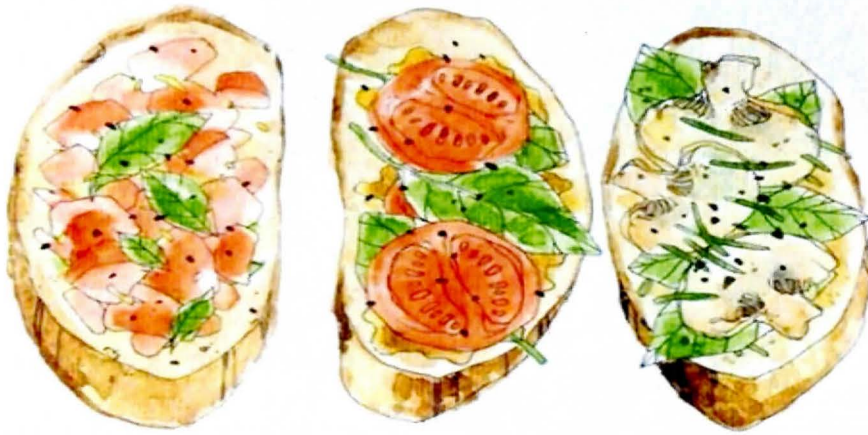
Succulent
Alyssa Medina
(Watercolor)



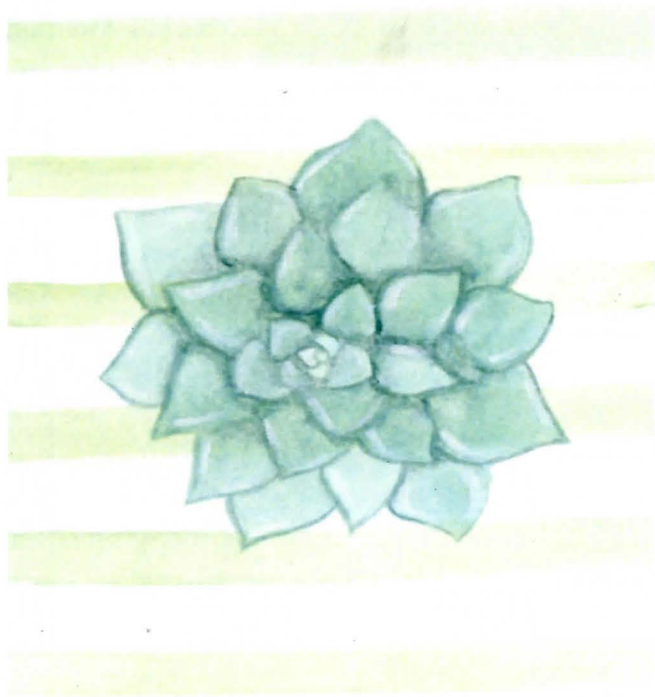
Promise
Max Gibbard
(Ink and Watercolor)

Toasts
Chiaki Hagiwara
(Watercolor)

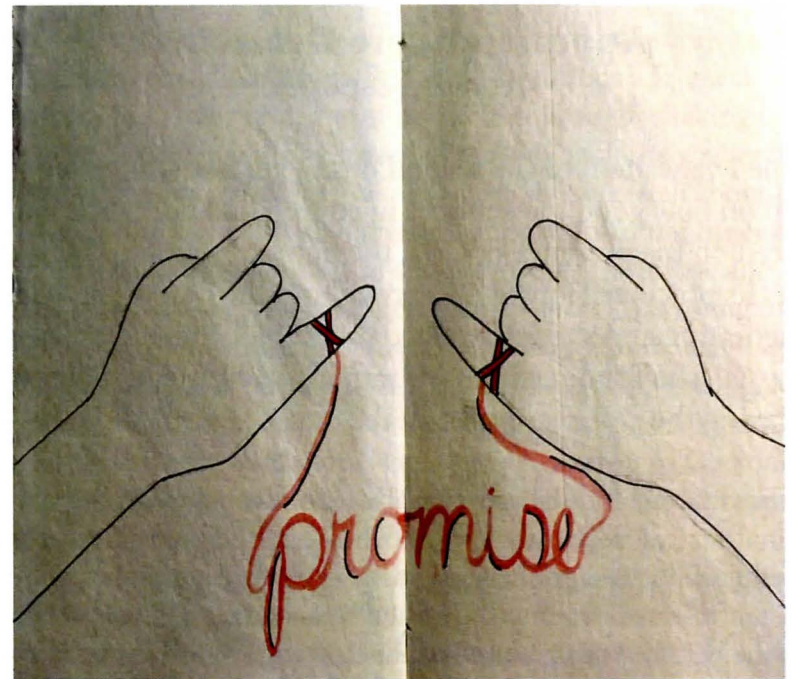




Bruschettas
Chiaki Hagiwara
(Watercolor)



Succulent
Alyssa Medina
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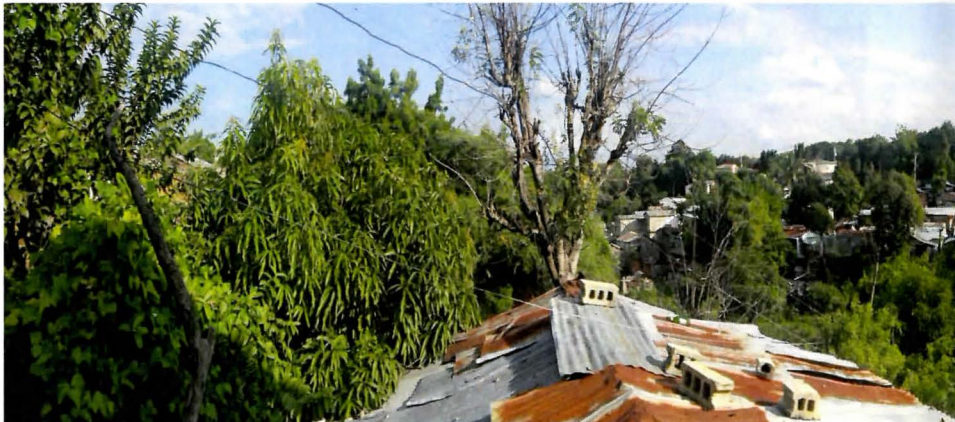


Appearances are Deceiving

Annette Espinell

While Eva waited for the second bus to get home she meditated on how good the services in church had been. She had feasted on the presence of God, the outpouring of his blessings and His precious Holy Spirit throughout the day. It had been invigorating and she really hated that it had come to an end. As usual, she dismissed those thoughts and instead focused on replaying the glorious events of the day.

The bus arrived and she moved aside to let the lady with the walker get in first. Eva frequently felt annoyed because ninety-five percent of people who used public transportation were not that respectful. The lady was assisted into the bus by a young lady. As Eva stepped into the bus she briefly observed the exchange of the young lady and a young man who was sitting on the seats at the front of the bus. The seats that were clearly labeled to be used for the elderly and handicapped. Even though Eva did not hear all the words, it was clear to her that the young lady asked the young man to clear the seat for the lady in the walker but his response had been either to ignore her or refuse her since he did not get up from the seat. The young woman assisted the lady in the walker to another seat shaking her head in obvious aggravation.



Being a witness to this short exchange was enough to set Eva into an inner rant of righteousness. She stood in the bus a few seats away from the young man and stared at him in anger shaking her head every so often while he glared at the lady with the walker like she was wrong for wanting to take his seat. She forgot all about the blessings of the day with her anger and annoyance at the rudeness of some people who did not care about those less fortunate and refused to show the elderly and needy any respect. The young man looked healthy and strong. He would have wanted someone to get up if it had been a loved one of his. Eva kept inwardly fussing. Her emotions went up and down between feeling pity for the young man because Eva knew that he would have to answer to God one day for his disobedience and disdain for his lack of consideration.

The bus was drawing close to Eva's stop and she noticed the young man stand up. He had to use the metal bars in the bus to propel his lower body off the seat. Eva's discombobulated thoughts immediately ceased. He might have looked able while he was sitting but it appeared that he had problems with his hips and legs that were not noticeable until he stood and took a few steps forward. He turned out to be one of those needy folks who was sitting at the right seat after all. Eva's heart sank in deep regret and conviction. Her arrogant assumptions and judgment cut short her own blessings of the day. If anyone had to answer to God, it certainly would not be the young man.



Untitled
Keyla Lora
(Photography)

Appearances are Deceiving

Annette Espinell

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The bus arrived and she moved aside to let the lady with the walker get in first. Eva frequently felt annoyed because ninety-five percent of people who used public transportation were not that respectful. The lady was assisted into the bus by a young lady. As Eva stepped into the bus she briefly observed the exchange of the young lady and a young man who was sitting on the seats at the front of the bus. The seats that were clearly labeled to be used for the elderly and handicapped. Even though Eva did not hear all the words, it was clear to her that the young lady asked the young man to clear the seat for the lady in the walker but his response had been either to ignore her or refuse her since he did not get up from the seat. The young woman assisted the lady in the walker to another seat shaking her head in obvious aggravation.



Being a witness to this short exchange was enough to set Eva into an inner rant of righteousness. She stood in the bus a few seats away from the young man and stared at him in anger shaking her head every so often while he glared at the lady with the walker like she was wrong for wanting to take his seat. She forgot all about the blessings of the day with her anger and annoyance at the rudeness of some people who did not care about those less fortunate and refused to show the elderly and needy any respect. The young man looked healthy and strong. He would have wanted someone to get up if it had been a loved one of his. Eva kept inwardly fussing. Her emotions went up and down between feeling pity for the young man because Eva knew that he would have to answer to God one day for his disobedience and disdain for his lack of consideration.

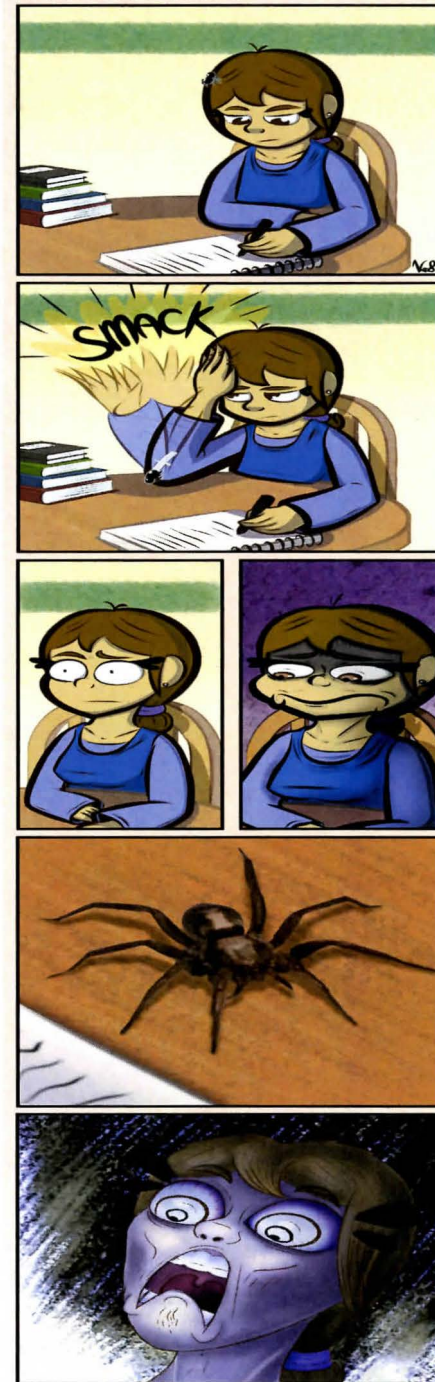
The bus was drawing close to Eva's stop and she noticed the young man stand up. He had to use the metal bars in the bus to propel his lower body off the seat. Eva's discombobulated thoughts immediately ceased. He might have looked able while he was sitting but it appeared that he had problems with his hips and legs that were not noticeable until he stood and took a few steps forward. He turned out to be one of those needy folks who was sitting at the right seat after all. Eva's heart sank in deep regret and conviction. Her arrogant assumptions and judgment cut short her own blessings of the day. If anyone had to answer to God, it certainly would not be the young man.





Bridge
Emily Posner
(Monotype Print with Hand coloring)

The Spider



The Spider
Violet Sutherland
(Digital Comic)

The Other. La Otra.

Monique J. Fortuné

The Other. La Otra.
Who is the other? La otra.
The other. La otra. The other. La otra.
Who is the intruder? The stranger?
Perceived or Real.
What walls of fear have we built?
Which walls need to be knocked down with the
sledgehammer of hope?
What have we done? ¿Que pasa?
Who is the other? La otra?
The unknown?
The uncommon?
What are we afraid of?
Who are we afraid of?
Do you know? Do you know? Do you know?
We the people.
Mi gente.
We the people.
Mi gente.
Mi gente.
We must know the truth - la verdad.
What are we afraid of?
Who are we afraid of?
We are human. First.
We are citizens bound by one planet.
El mundo.
Truth be told - la verdad.
Me. You. We. Us.
Somewhere. Some place.
We are... the other...la otra.



Resurrecting a Garden Entity

Mecca Alim

(Clip Studio Paint)

Samsonite

Elizabeth Kelso

Lisa holds her Samsonite tightly and glances over her shoulder. She steps onto the platform. The dark brown heat and a dank smell smack her in the face. Everyone is talking about the approaching blizzard, but this is the first she's hearing of it. As she starts up the staircase gripping her suitcase by the handle, anxiety prickles the back of her neck. She can't shake the feeling that she's forgetting something. When she gets to the top of the staircase she feels her coat pockets and around in her bra, but there is nothing in either place. Still the feeling gnaws at her.

She pushes through the turnstile and then realizes she could have taken the Shuttle train to the West Side. Now she'll have to walk and hope that her last subway transfer is still valid. She drags her luggage behind her and weaves through the hoards of tourists starrng up at the backwards constellations.

The cold Manhattan air surrounds her. The sky is as gray as the sidewalk and white flakes are forming around her. Her suitcase bumps along the sidewalk as she makes her way from Grand Central Station to the West Side. Homeless people sit peppered down each block with signs asking for \$35 for a bus / train / plane ticket, to go see their dead / dying / sick, mother / grandmother / stepfather in North Carolina / Atlanta / Poughkeepsie. Their eyes are closed and hands clasped in prayer. They silently pray, "Please let these suckers drop a twenty into my cup, I need a hit."

He stands with his head down and hands in his pants pocket. From behind he looks like someone she knew in another life. Their eyes meet as she passes, he recognizes her. She hardly recognizes him.

"Lisa?" He smiles. A smile that once made her fall to her knees and thank God for the gift of sight, is now a smile that is home to Meth mouth. She stops and looks at him not sure what to do or say.

"Rob? Hi."

"How've you been?"

Beads of sweat trickle down his forehead from underneath his hood.
"Good."

He closes in on her and wraps his arms around her and she can feel his malnourished bones press against her. She gives him a few lame pats on his back.

"What are you doing out here?" she asks him and looks around to see his cardboard sign and broken suitcase, the larger mate to her Samsonite.

"I'm out here now, things got rough."

Lisa nods and looks at his eyes. They are still the most beautiful amber, but they are swimming in glass. He makes an attempt to control his twitching, but can't.

Lisa tries not to be angry when she remembers that he took off without warning over a year ago.

"So you're going to sleep out here tonight?"

He nods. "Unless I can make enough for a hotel room. Or you can put me up...just kidding."

She folds her arms and considers him for a moment, his teeth, his sweat, and his scabbed skin. He leans over and playfully nudges her arm. "Hey can you give me a few bucks at least?"

He doesn't smell rank but he has Meth breath. He pulls out a ciga-

rette and his hands shake as he tries to light it.

“Come on Lisa, help me out. I need to get out of the snow.”

“Can’t you ride the subway until the snow stops?”

“I don’t ride the trains anymore, not since I got robbed.”

She did love him once. They shared a home, a life. But people change and life moves forward. She pats her coat pockets and gasps. She snaps her fingers and loudly says, “I know what I forgot.” Rob jumps at her sudden outburst. His cigarette falls out of his mouth, but he bends down to retrieve it and sticks it back in-between his rotten teeth.

“I was getting off the train and I kept thinking I forgot something, but I couldn’t remember.”

“Oh, what?”

“I forgot my fucks to give. I guess I left them on the train.”

She wraps her cold fingers around the handle of her Samsonite and continues down the street crunching on the snow that will soon bury the island and all who lie on it.

Her scarf is wrapped around her face and the snow whips through the air like a swarm of locust. She finds her way to 8th Avenue and lifts her suitcase to go down into the subway station. She fumbles to remove her fingerless gloves and pulls her tattered Metrocard out of her duffle bag.

She swipes and hears the beep and silently thanks God that the transfer is still valid. The E-train rumbles into the station and she heaves her suitcase on to the train. She sits in the corner, thanking God again for another stroke of luck. She unwraps her scarf from around her neck and face, and pulls her Samsonite close. Eyes look at her sideways, people shuffle away. She wraps the straps of the duffle around her body and closes the hood of her sweatshirt tightly around her face. They pretend not to see her and she has no desire to see them. She folds her arms and settles in for the night.

Bang Bang

Bianca Jeannot

It still hurts

The memories that is

Of laughter, and tears

Of secrets whispered into each others ears

The worst part is,

I don’t even think you looked

When you fired the shot

Or even now, as I’m still wounded

Asking what I did wrong

And If I deserve this silent, dead space

existing where I never thought it could



Left: *The Strain of Denial*

Right: *Denial*

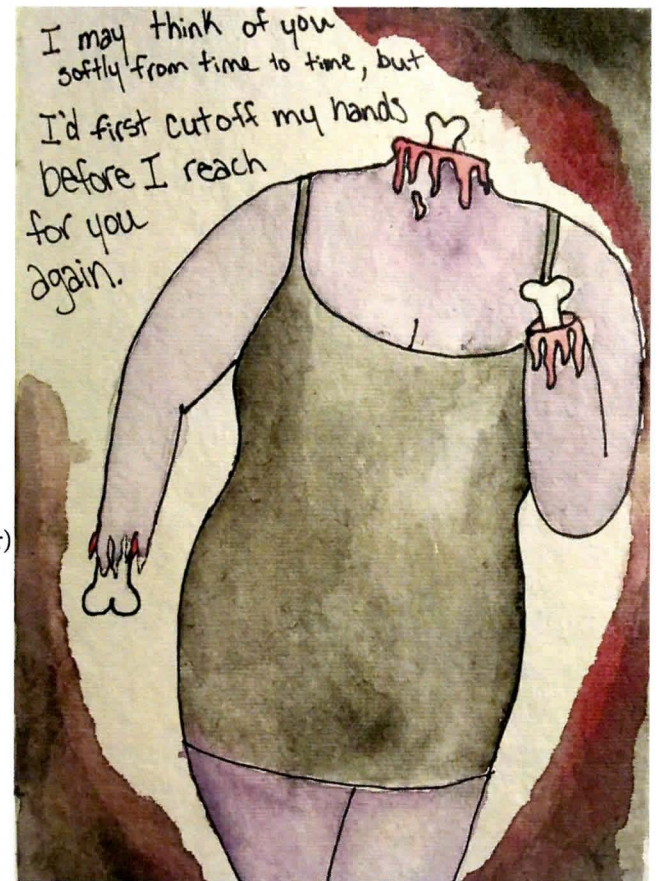
Cristina Acevedo

(Aqueous Media)

Wounded Words
 Kat Sayegh
 (Mixed Media on Canvas)



Untitled
 Max Gibbard
 (Ink and Watercolor)



Contaminant
 Alyssa Medina
 (Photography)

Celaeno



Emily Posner
Pleiades Constellation Series,
(Digital Painting)

Electra



Eternity

Alyssa Medina

"Unkept, spent feather
no longer able to
come together again.

Yet still it reaches
with a desire to
leave its mark
upon the
world..."



Feather Pen
Alyssa Medina
(India Ink on paper)

"If you wish to show me fear
in a handful of ashes,
then I shall show you
immortality
through the ink
of a
pen"

Nowhere Home

Naashia Naufal

She stood at the end of the hallway and looked around. One last time. She would see it all for one last time. There was an unsettling stillness in the room. Air poured in from the window, and no one to breathe it. The baby had left earlier that morning, his drawings plastered on the floor. Huge sheets of paper with scribbles, taped to the floor. And what scribbles! The same two things on repeat: an airplane and a star. He would clench his tiny fists and you had to murmur "Twinkle, twinkle?" and he would solemnly nod. She had spent many evenings trying to quell her laughter. Of course he had always lived close to Heathrow, since he had been born, which of course had been last year and how he looked at one and said "Hmm!" rather decisively. She felt a lump in her throat and looked around. Never had she been this far away from home. She thought of all the things she'd miss. Karachi and home and the funny little area where they lived: There was nowhere like Karachi.

Hot, sticky and furious on an average summer's day- The store people snobbish and vain- their customers equally pretentious. Karachi, on a blazing summer's day and a drive round town, driving past the lookalike streets, heedless of stop signs and red lights, bumping off on the road to McDonald's. The sea of course would always be salty and filthy - dank-looking with little white waves skidding on to the shore. And a nasty smell of rotting eggs. People of course, didn't care. They'd be sitting by the beach, their brown toes sticking in the sand, pant legs rolled up. Of course there was always that one man who sat, perched in the sand, pensively gazing across the Arabian Sea, the back of his knees visible, even though he sat with his trouser legs rolled up, revealing a dark brown, faintly hairy body.

The sea! Perhaps that was why it felt so far away. There would now be miles of sea separating them. Karachi and America. Miles perhaps, was not the right word, but it had a feel to it. Miles of sea. She thought of herself, parting the Arabian Sea; standing by the shore, her naked body- (why was she naked?) in the middle, hands spread forth, dividing the choppy waters. She paused. Why was she thinking of the sea when she was about to leave? They'd lived by the sea for the last six years of course, but how often had they visited it as a family? Twice? Maybe thrice? Of course she'd visited it by herself with some friends. She recalled the angry, bitter feeling that had choked her insides. That had been her first outing since the breakup. But for his bouts of sullenness and those fits of inebriation, would they have been together; she had clutched both hands against her chest, the sky glowing a glorious red and orange, the peddler's monkey staring at them all. Deep brown eyes. Of course she would never forgive Ergdahl. Deep down she'd always known that. She would move away, marry- open her legs for more than one man, but she would never forgive him. Deep down she knew and she lamented the loss of her childhood at twenty. And deep down she knew she hated him for having snatched her naiveté.

But Erghdal was married now – to a great white shark with a smile that would petrify one, wading about in that ridiculous traditional blue dress. And she was moving to America, and had no one to call Jaan.

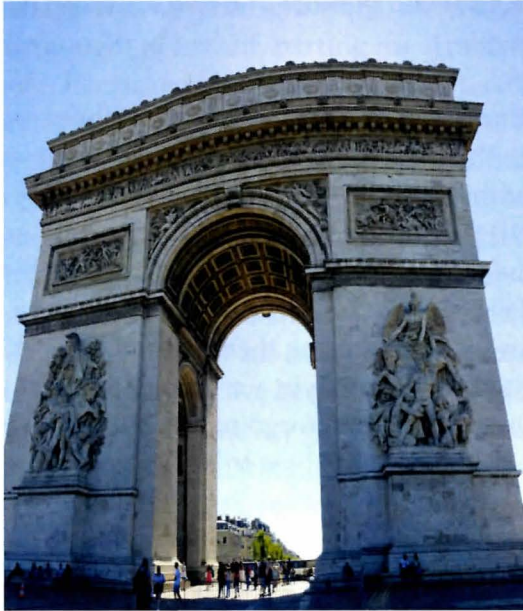
America! America on a fine fall day, with the leaves turning crisp and crunching underfoot, the undergrowth stinging one's feet- encased though they might be in sneakers and socks. America on an apple-picking day when one visited farms and paid the extravagant price of fifteen dollars for a measly plastic bag and a handful of apples.

She zipped up her suitcase and looked around. Nothing left except those two bras in the drawer- padded and sweaty and weighing 2kg each bra, it was pointless Ammi had pointed out, to pack those big heavy things.

But she felt a twinge of sadness nonetheless. She'd bought those bras, paid for them, chosen them. She'd remembered that sunny March day- a mere six months ago (who'd have believed things could have changed so fast!) that she had bought them for Ergdahl- thinking of course, he'd prefer a woman in fancy lingerie. Five thousand rupees no less. Perhaps not Victoria's Secret, but money spent nonetheless. And now she was leaving them behind. She felt sad, helpless at the thought of them sitting in a crumpled heap in the large drawer in her room. Lonely and forgotten. A bout of anger shot up her insides. What right had those bras to be left uncared for in a side drawer of a room she wouldn't see for the next few months? She stashed them in her suitcase and furiously zipped it up.

Ahead, she heard Ammi's voice calling her to come downstairs. There was only half an hour. Half an hour to class. She stood by the train station and indifferently surveyed the crowd milling round the train. Exhaustion over swept her. America, Karachi what did it matter? She'd always be an outsider. Who had it been who'd said that an artist would never belong? More sadness overtook her. She got on the train and stood to one side, dismally clutching her handbag. A woman smiled at her. She smiled back and looked at her shoes. Canvas shoes, great for walking, not so much for a day when it had rained and mud crowded the streets. There was something vaguely familiar. She looked up and peered into the curious eyes of Ergdahl's great white shark.

Across



Can-Jenea Betances
(Photography)

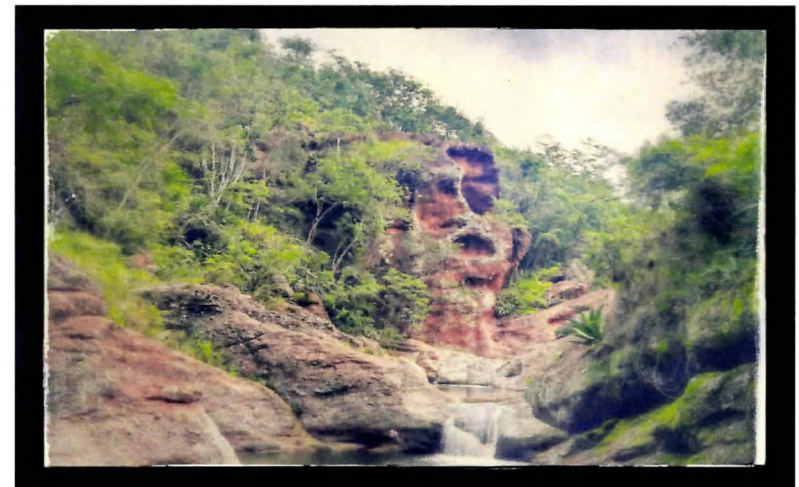


Tanieka Wright
(Photography)

Borders



Jayastray Sohit
(Photography)



Keyla Lora
(Photography)



Keyla Lora
(Photography)



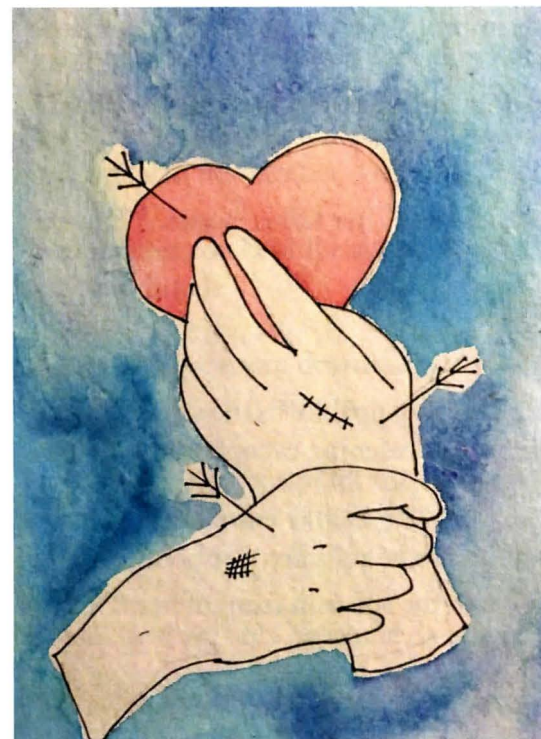
London Eye
Can-Jenea Betances
(Photography)

Untitled

Jade Billups

Drowning in
Words
On luminescent
Screens
Hanging yourself
By the letters
On
The keyboard
Overdose
On
The status
Of emotions
Dying to
Update

Brain bleeding
Into the
Abyss
Of social media
Shit
Blood
On
Your selfies
"Why won't
Y'all help
Me"
Crying
For ten seconds
Till it
Disappears
The ghost
Hears-



Untitled
Max Gibbard
(Ink and Watercolor)

Father's Loving Gift

Karishma Krishna Kumar

Red and white dots arched her eyebrows.
The heavy gold nose ring hung beyond the line of her lower lip;

Briefly brushing against the circular shape that her mother had
drawn with kohl;

To wade off evil, "Protect my child, dear Lord;
Keep her safe", her mother whispered.
The alta; a thick red coat of it no less;

Translated itself into an annoying itch at a very unreachable corner
of her left foot.

Her wedding ghagra was large and heavy.
Mostly heavy.
She tried to use the intricate embroidery at the bottom of her large
skirt to satisfy her itch.
Her father walked into the room and she straightened her spine in
attention.

"The baraat has left the groom's house", her father began. "They just
called me so we can be prepared;

Are we?"

The question hung in the air, almost palpable. In the street below, a
small pile-up had horns blaring in deafening cacophony;

Breaking the silence, in the room.

She watched the alphabet form in the space in front of her. Tiny
letters dangling;

No strings attached; suspended mid-air. So, were they prepared?

Her family; were they prepared with whatever they were preparing
to be prepared for?

Were they?
Was she?

Prepared?

Was anyone?

Is anyone ever 'prepared' for a marriage?
Every girl is ready for a wedding. Desperately ready.
But how many were equipped for a marriage? Two very, very different
things. A wedding is a festival;

Party; merriment; as the case may be that lasts for at best,

Two weeks. A marriage, on the other hand; is forever.

"Yes", her mother volunteered; slicing a cleaver across her thoughts.
Pushing forth her mother declared, "We are ready."

"Where have you kept the suitcase with the 3 lakh rupees?", her
father enquired.

"It's in the store room downstairs; and on top of the suitcase is a bag
that contains;

The car keys, the receipt for the refrigerator and the papers of the
new flat", her mother rattled off.
Her father nodded and slipped out of the room.

"Thank God we only have one daughter!", her mother muttered.

The baraat arrived. Baraat; the glittery parade that the groom brought over to the bride's house;

To take her back after an expensive party at his father in law's expense and; a spectacular ceremony replete with vows and blessings. 'The noise, the pollution and the winsome mare', she thought as she looked out of her balcony;

Down, at the groom; suited in a pure silk wedding ensemble curtesy; her father, atop the mare.

She couldn't see his face; hidden behind strings of scented flowers dropping down from his silk hat.

Her mind barely remembered what he looked like; short glimpses of him that she'd caught during the wedding preparations. 'Oh well', she sighed inwardly, 'she had her whole life to memorise his features.'

She was carefully brought to the mandap, where the wedding ceremony was to take place.

Her jewellery slowing her down;

She managed to make it to her post a little while after the chanting had begun.

Her mother and aunts lowered her into the assigned space in front of the fire. Its red hot flames burning her face instead of cajoling it with warmth.

A small group of people gathered a little way from the mandap and voices began to rise.

She lifted her ghoongat halfway and saw her father placing his turban at the feet of the groom's father.

Her mother came and whispered to her, "They want 6 Lakhs and a

bigger car;

Or the boy won't sit for the wedding."

She watched helplessly. What could she do?
Her fate depended on the size of a car.

Her father began writing cheques, and making phone calls.

Her mother handed over all the jewellery she was wearing; and sat to make a list of the values;

Of the gold she would bring;

The morning next.

The wedding was beautiful.
She didn't see it.
The ghoongat hindered her vision.

His home was smaller than what she'd gleaned from the description her father had come back with.

She kicked herself at the unholy thought. She remembered her mother's wise words, "Always know that there is nothing better than what your husband has."

She gently nudged the kalash filled with rice using her right foot; and placed the same foot into a plate of red alta.

The mildly gooey liquid clung to the underside of her foot as she lifted it off to imprint the floor with her;

Footprint.
Her life had begun.

“They asked for another 15 Lakhs. They want to make a down payment on a new house”, her mother whispered on one of her sporadic visits.

The bruises from yesterday’s thrashing still stung. She lowered her eyes.

Her mother went home quietly.

They locked her in the store room of the house, at the back of the kitchen;

When the money didn’t come from her parents.

She didn’t know if they came to visit. Days turned into weeks.

Weeks into months.

Months into years.

There was an itch at the corner of her left foot. She couldn’t reach out to it. She had been starved for months.

Her body had forgotten how to bend.

Her fingers wouldn’t hold up on their own.

Her lips dry and chapped.

She cried out for a drink of water.

No one came to her aid.

They sold her for 30,000 rupees.

‘What will they tell my family, when they come to visit?’, she wondered as the chloroform dissolved her senses.



Currently unnamed
Christina Acevedo
(Aqueous media)



Currently unnamed
Cristina Acevedo
(Aqueous Media)



when the bodies do not count

Jennifer Scurio
(culpted clay figures in a
recessed wood frame)

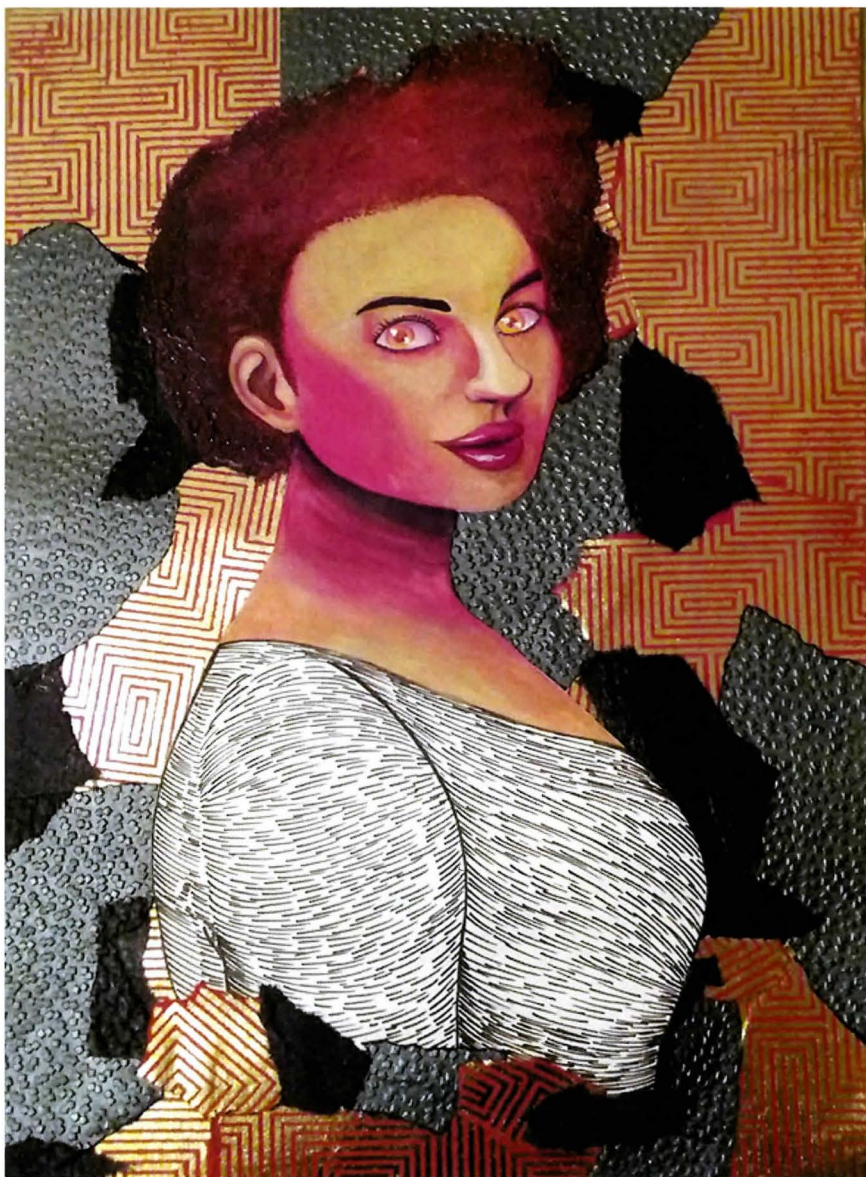
Untitled

Bianca Jeannot

Too many competitions exist
And too many ladders to climb
Is it too much to ask
To sink into the sublime

Too many tests
And too many tries
Why must there be so many rules to our lives

Too many crooks
And so many lies
No wonder our children sing broken nursery rhymes



Red Sister
Mecca Alim
(Mixed Media on Paper)

From your loving daughter

Karishma Krishna Kumar

Friday, 12th March

1993, Bombay

Dear Ma,

It's almost as if flashcards; the ones that we'd give to the children in kindergarten for their ABCs; yeah, flashcards like those.

That's what this past decade has felt like to me. There are so many unopened boxes in my past, that my expanding mind is quickly filling up.

Like a loop, my mind goes back and forth; in and out, and sometimes walking through the dark alleyways of the past, I am actually, in fact, sitting in the present.

Ma, I am sorry. I know that I've been all over the place. And, maybe, still am. I wake up bang in the middle of an ongoing conflict and don't realise that I am the one who started the riot. Ma, I am, really, really sorry.

Ma, with you and me, it's different. We're both volatile, combustible even. When you or I get upset, we kick and scream and let go. That's it Ma. We. Let. Go.

And so, it's okay the next day to talk about kadi-chawal. Or the maid. Or the telephone bill. But it's not the same with Pa. You should have told me, Ma. Because, I guess, perhaps, only you knew! Because Ma, truly, only you know Pa well enough to know.

Ma, I am sorry that I told you my secret. It is a burden you didn't deserve to carry; for the rest of your life. But. Ma.

Ma, I got scared. These nightmares began roughly fifteen years ago

and then those nightmares started becoming real. Ma.

Ma. Ma, I am sorry. I couldn't tell reality apart from the dream. Ma. Ma. I'm sorry.

I got confused. But, I tried Ma. I did. To thwart the itch under my foot, the dry roof of my mouth. I tried, Ma, to trust.

I forced myself back into the reality that was almost similar to the nightmare, Ma. I'm sorry. The thwarting didn't work Ma. It just didn't. I'm afraid of intimacy now; now that the nightmares are more real than reality to me, Ma. I want to run. Ma. I want to change this awful reality that doesn't need to be mine; anymore. I want a second chance, Ma.

A do-over? I want another shot at living again, learning again. Finding myself and I don't know Ma, maybe. Maybe. Try falling in love again? I don't know Ma.

The possibilities are endless. So many billions of things; that are nothing like the things that you, me and Pa saw. Nothing like that at all.

Ma, maybe there's love on the other side. Ma. Maybe in that reality; across that bridge Ma; you, me and Pa; don't fight anymore. Maybe? I love you, Ma.

Thank you for never ever ever leaving my side, Ma. And Ma, thank you for Pa.

Love,
Your daughter

Ps. I made custard. It's in the fridge.



MRI 16

Kat Sayegh
(Acrylic on canvas)

Strength and Pain

Kat Sayegh
(Acrylic on canvas)



Big Black Man

Jade Billups

Big black man
Crossed my path
My hands
Tighten around
My life
I'm scared.

Big black man
Leaves
My hands
Go slack
I think
I was scared
'Cause he's black.

Big black man
Why yo' skin
So dark
You frightening
The kids
With your midnight
Hue

Big black man
Did you ask to
Be born
This way

Big black man
With
Obsidian eyes
What have
You seen

Big black man
Did you
Know
I was scared
For nothing.



Chronic 1
Kat Sayegh
(Acrylic on Canvas Panel)

Chronic 2
Kat Sayegh
(Acrylic on Canvas Panel)



Cornered

Karishma Krishna Kumar

She slid the brown packet under her bed.
DHL can go fuck themselves.
Her tea, steam emanating, diminished beside her.
Another call, another promise, another complicated web of lies.

Her phone buzzed, Truecaller informed her that the call was from United Kingdom.
Another fiasco waiting to unveil itself upon her.

She answered.
“This is UdayKumar Swami from United Kingdom. I saw your profile on BharatMatrimony.com, and I liked it. Would you like to check mine out before we continue this conversation?”

“Who gave you my number?”

“Your mother, I called her first.” UdayKumar repeated obviously rehearsed lines, “We got along quite well. Did she not tell you that I was going to call?”. One breath; a host of information.

“No. I thought my profile was deleted.” She shifted her weight from her right foot to her left. “Is it still active?”

“Yes, it is still active.” UdayKumar certainly wasn’t picking up her hints of disinterest continued with zealous determination, “That’s how I found it.” Instant romantic soufflé. “That’s how I found you.”

“Oh? I’m really extremely sorry. But, I had asked for my profile to be deleted.” She paused allowing him to digest the burst of rejection; even before the moonlit dance on the song of flirtation. Virtual flirtation. “I have recently decided to not get married. At all.”

The finality crept into her voice and she struggled unguarded.

Had she just agreed to give up on the fairy-tale happily ever after? Forever? Really? Princesses and Barbie dolls were crying in some little girl’s house; mourning for her. Oh well.

“Oh it’s alright. I had no idea. Thanks for answering the call.” UdayKumar Swami FINALLY got it.

“Yeah, that’s alright. I don’t think you should get married either.” She decided to fuck with his day and in return hoped he would give her ‘profile’ a shitty review and they’d ban her from BharatMatrimony.com for good. Also he was being too nice about her decision, not even trying to convince her. Did arranged marriage mean that her beau wouldn’t even try to court her?

“Excuse me?” UdayKumar Swami was not happy with her suggestion. He sounded pissed. Super pissed.

“Yeah. Why are you getting married?” She pushed his fragile buttons. Oh, how easy was Mr. Swami; in the palm of her hand, dancing around her pinkie finger.

“I don’t know. It’s the right thing to do. It’s the right time.” UdayKumar began reading out his bio on BharatMatrimony.com. “I’m working for a well-known bank in London. I’m settled.” Smart UdayKumar had carefully left out details like the Bank’s actual name while describing why a woman should trust him enough to marry him.

“Can you guarantee that you’ll be a fantastic husband?” She probed further into the mush of Mr. Swami’s squishy ego.

“No one can guarantee that.” Mr. Swami proceeded to rope his neck around with the leash in her hands. “And it is a two-way thing. My wife has to be fantastic for me to be a fantastic husband.”

“So there’s a variable.” She caught the weakest link with her sharp

talons. "So this may or may not work, right?"

"Right." Sigh, Mr. Swami; *watch him go*.

"Can you be absolutely sure that you'll be a perfect father?" She wasn't done yet; chewing. Not ready yet; to spit Mr. Swami out.

"Nobody is perfect. We all make mistakes. So, no I cannot be sure that I'll be a perfect father." Mr. Swami was confident in being unsure of being a perfect father.

"So there is a possibility that you may eternally screw up the children you bear. Yes?"

"Yes." Check. Mate. Dear Mr. Swami.

"So there is the further possibility, hypothetical of course, that you might raise and bear serial killers, neurotic or psychologically unstable adults?" She prepared for the drop. EDM, you fucked everyone up.



"That is a bit far-fetched, isn't it?" UdayKumar was walking on thin ice; aware now that he was being royally fucked with. Oh bitter-sweet irony of killing someone as they watch.

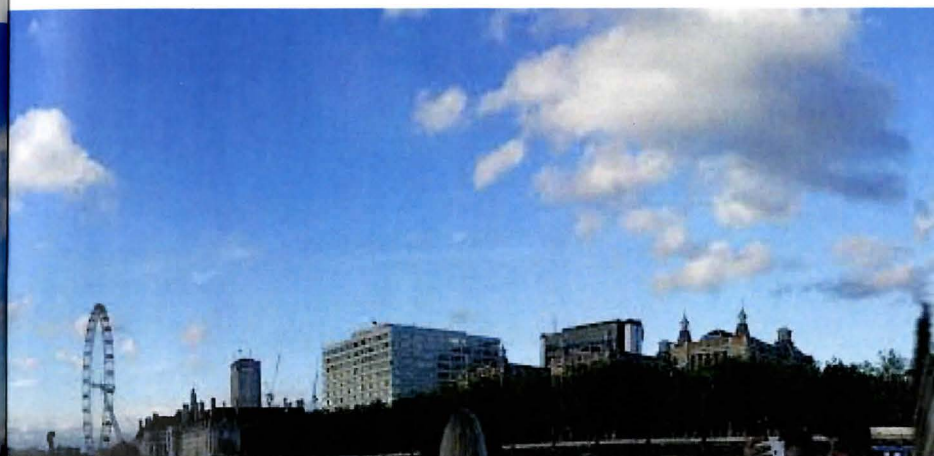
"Is it? You are consciously choosing to create a marriage that isn't based in trust, faith, love, magic and simple plain attraction even. Right?" She spat logic with accuracy, hitting the thin brittle walls inside of Mr. Swami's head. And she liked how the power felt pressed against her lips.

"Right." Mr. Swami had given up; he had lost the battle before it was over.

The fight brewed inside her, a more raging fire than before. "Instead it is based on qualifications, salary, location, age, height and facial features. Yes?"

"Yes." One word replies. Wow, Mr. Swami was now a little broken too. Her cancer had spread.

"So do you still think you should get married?" Home. Run. Baby. Mr. Swami. Out.



Untitled
Can-Jenea Betances
(Photography)

I Pray

Zoila Rivera

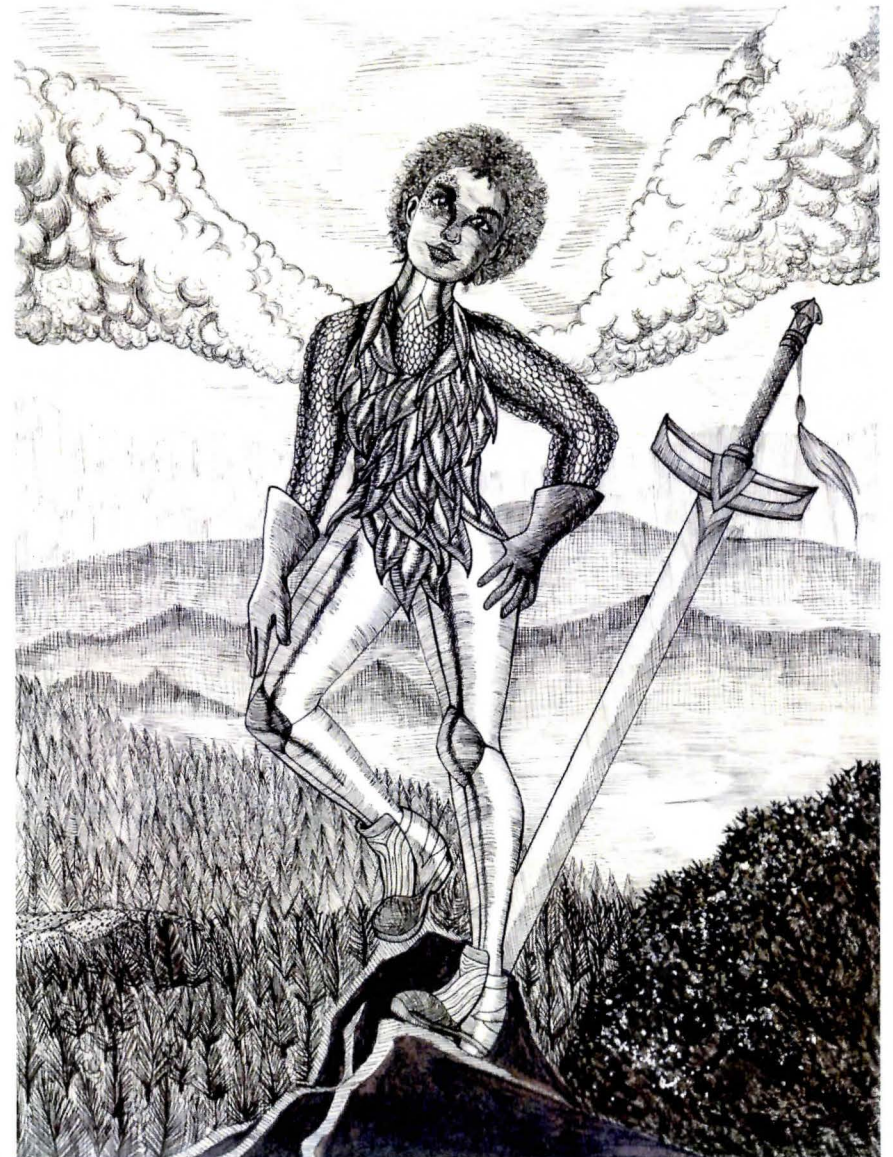
Where do I go from here?
Lost in an unforgiving cycle,
Like a ship lost in a storm at sea
But I do not fear,
I pray.

What am I meant to be?
Thrown in so many directions,
Struggling to rise like the eastern sun,
But I look to the powers above me.
I pray.

How do I stay strong?
I'm pasted with blood, sweat, and tears.
No one to prove but myself,
But the battle won't last long,
I pray.

When do I take my rest?
My heart is pounding like a beating drum.
I run, I jump, I scream out loud,
Determined to pass the test.
I pray.

Who do I turn to?
When I can't fight anymore?
When I'm backed up in the corner?
Those who remain true.
But until then, I pray.



Victory

Mecca Alim

(Ink and Acrylic Medium on Paper)



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